

there, it is partly because they change so amazingly litde, through all the years from nine to fifty-eight. For his physical likeness, indeed, we must look elsewhere; we know how much his exterior changed, from a golden young Apollo in red shirt and blue trousers to the bulky, moustachioed, large-nosed Norman, half ecclesiastic, half gendarme in appearance, who would have been as glad as any of his Viking ancestors to harry the waddling bourgeoisie with fire and sword through the streets of Rouen—and yet might be seen after some outburst of apoplectic fury against them leaning from his window to stroke a flower. But if his youthful beauty aged, Flaubert's personality, on the other hand, seems full-grown almost from childhood. To the English mind the precocity of French schoolboys in general is apt to be terrifying; but even so there was something exceptional about this child of nine, whose first extant letter to a litde friend begins: 'Tu as raison de dire que le jour de Fan est bete'¹—an utterance not unworthy of that disillusioned infant of Hardy's *Jude*, 'Litde Father Time'; and goes on, with its still childish spelling and punctuation: 'Si tu veux nous associers pour 6crire moi, j'ecrirait des comedie et toi tu ecriras tes reves, et comme il y a une dame qui vient chez papa et qui nous contes toujours de betises je les ecrirait.'

Here, in this earliest letter, appear already not only

Flaubert's lifelong hatred of the
established world, not
only his impulse to turn away from it to
literature, but
even the future subject-matter of this writer
whose perpetual theme was to be, not the tragedy of
man's sinful
disobedience, but the farce of man's
incorrigible fatuity.
The next letter plans a whole series of
novels; two others,
written when the writer was now ten,
reveal that he is

Quoted in T. H. Baudet, *Flaubert*,